

# 'Wheaties' aren't going to make a collector rich

By Roger Boye

**T**his week's column answers questions from Chicago Tribune readers:

**Q**—During the past decade, we've saved more than 200 "wheat cents" from circulation. How much could we get if we sold them?

C.N., Elmhurst

**A**—Most local dealers aren't buying the common dates, such as circulated specimens of nearly all "wheaties" made between 1940 and 1958. Although such coins retail for about 5 cents each, dealers have ample quantities in stock, or they can quickly obtain additional supplies by paying less than 1½ cents per coin.

Some of the earlier specimens are more valuable, especially those showing little or no wear. In "typical uncirculated condition," the rarest regular-issue Lincoln cent is the 1914-D [a "wheat cent"], which retails for \$900 or so.

Uncle Sam issued Lincoln cents with the wheat design—so-called because two ears of wheat are depicted on the tails side—from 1909 to 1958. Officials switched to the Lincoln Memorial image in 1959 as a way to mark Abe's 150th birthday.

**Q**—What is the value of a 1921 Liberty-head silver dollar in mint condition? The back side has an eagle with spread wings but no mint mark.

L.T., Oglesby, Ill.

**A**—You own the most common old dollar coin, which contains .77 of an ounce of silver. Your piece would retail for about \$25; specimens worn from circulation go for \$14 or so.

**Q**—I have a 1964-D Lincoln cent that has two extra 4s, one just below and the other just to the right of the 4 in the date. The rest of the design is normal. Should I start planning my retirement?

J.J., Chicago

**A**—No. Most likely, a prankster using special tools added those extra digits to your coin. Experts say there's almost no chance that government machines could create such an error, given modern-day minting procedures. Check the coin under high magnification for signs of tampering.

**Q**—Why are there still so many 1964 nickels in circulation? I get them in change nearly every day.

E.W., Chicago

**A**—Officials issued a record 2.8 billion nickels in 1964 to help relieve a coin shortage. That total is nearly triple the number of nickels minted in any other year, before or since.

*Questions about coins or currency? Send your queries to Roger Boye, The Arts, The Chicago Tribune, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. Enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a personal reply and allow at least four weeks for the answer.*